



Historic Perspectives

Preservation of Prince William County's Historic Resources

Spring 2023 Contents

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PRINCE WILLIAM

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Voices of Thoroughfare

The Thoroughfare Historic Recordation Project is drawing to a close, but the work to share the important information about this community has only just begun. Thoroughfare is a community in western Prince William County that was founded by former slaves and mixed race families, including those of Native American descent, after the Civil War. In 2021, Prince William County dedicated resources towards preserving and interpreting Thoroughfare's past and Dovetail Cultural Resource Group coordinated with the Office of Historic Preservation to work on this multi-faceted project. This project included an archaeological assessment, architectural study, archival research, and perhaps most importantly, oral histories



Harvey Allen-Jones with Grigsby-Jones Family Bible.

with eleven residents from the community.

Edits to the oral history report are currently wrapping up and will soon be shared with the public. All of those interviewed



1918 photograph of North Fork School, courtesy of Donald Christian.

are descendants of long-time residents in Thoroughfare, and their stories compliment and build upon the recent extensive research into the community. The interviews were conducted between October 2021 and April 2022 by Dovetail historian and architectural historian, Danae Peckler. The report is presented in summaries and grouped by kinship groups. Sadly, the eldest resident interviewed, Willie Fields, passed away in January 2023, making the information gathered in his interview all the more important to understanding recent history in the area.

In addition to these interviews, many of the participants provided valuable additional resources, including information from family bibles, historic photographs, and other memorabilia that told the story of life in historic Thoroughfare. The photographs are particularly valuable as artifacts of the last century of life in the community, showcasing important elements of the landscape such as the North Fork School, which is no longer extant, and the relocation of the local Simmons House when Interstate 66 came through the area in the 1960s.

This report has been reviewed



Historic photograph showing Simmons House being moved in June 1966, courtesy of Donald Christian.

and edited closely by the interviewees, and the final product reflects the breadth of experiences and history in this small, close-knit community. We look forward to sharing the report soon on the Thoroughfare

Community Updates page as well as on our website and social media.

Lauren Maloy
Historic Communities Coordinator

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Learn about our many events throughout the year, see candid photos, get up to the minute accounts through Facebook Live and Twitter as well as find out interesting facts about Prince William County history.

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Preservation Corner

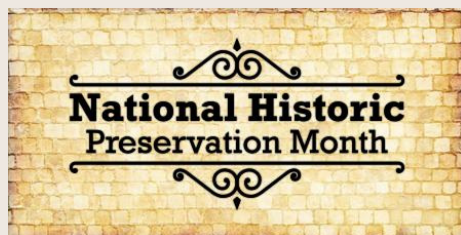
Internship Report

My name is Charlie Overhulser, and I have recently interned with the Prince William County Office of Historic Preservation. I am a senior at Randolph College in Lynchburg, Virginia. I am majoring in Museum and Heritage Studies, and minoring in History and Art History. During the internship, which took place

during my winter break, I worked with the archaeological artifacts and cataloging them into Past Perfect. I had some experience in collections management going into the internship, in ancient archaeological collections. However, this internship allowed me to expand on my knowledge and learn a different software, Past Perfect, and gain more real-

world experience, which is a skill I can transfer to a future career in the museum field. Overall, I enjoyed the internship and found it to be helpful. In regards to my career goals, I can potentially see myself working in collections management in the future.

Charlie Overhulser
Collections Intern
Randolph College, 2022



May is National Historic Preservation Month!

Since 1973, local preservation groups, state historical societies, and business and civic organizations across the country celebrate Historic Preservation Month through activities that promote historic places and heritage tourism, and that demonstrate the social and economic benefits of historic preservation.

Did you know that the Office of Historic Preservation preserves 13 sites and over 550 acres of historically and culturally significant property throughout the county? From Bristoe Station Battlefield and Brentsville to Rippon Lodge and Cockpit Point, we strive to protect Prince William County's heritage and provide the community a chance to learn and engage in these historic places.

Participate in Preservation Month by making use of our efforts! Join us for a tour or an event, follow us Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube for our videos and articles, and don't forget to tell your friends and family about Prince William County's history!

For more information about what we preserve, check us out at www.pwcva.gov/history and together we can preserve Prince William County's unique history!

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Image Spotlight

Paintings of Julia Anne Blackburn Washington and Bushrod Washington



Image of Julia Anne Blackburn Washington, courtesy of the Curator's Office, United States Supreme Court



Image of Bushrod Washington, courtesy of the Curator's Office, United States Supreme Court

Historical research can sometimes take you to some really cool and interesting places. Staff at Rippon Lodge traveled to Washington DC last Fall to visit the United States Supreme Court. Why did we go to the Court? To view two paintings on display there. The paintings are of Julia Anne Blackburn Washington and her husband Supreme Court Justice Bushrod Washington. Julia Anne is the oldest daughter of Thomas and Christian Blackburn of Rippon Lodge. She married Bushrod Washington, the nephew of

George Washington in 1785, at Rippon Lodge in the Best Room. George and Martha were unable to attend the wedding but did host the newlyweds at Mount Vernon later for a formal brunch recognizing their recent union.

We don't know much about the paintings other than they show a very young couple in the prime of their lives. We think they might be wedding portraits, but we are not certain. We are continuing to work with the Court Curator on the history of these paintings. The paintings have traveled quite extensively in their history and

at one time hung in the White House. They are privately owned and were loaned to the Supreme Court in the 1970's and have remained there ever since. They are not on public view. We will continue to research these paintings and determine who the artist might have been and when they were painted and where did they go after the deaths of the Washingtons in 1829. Stay tuned for more updates on this interesting curatorial mystery!

Dan Goldstein
Historic Interpreter, Rippon Lodge
Historic Site



History Corner

1863 Christmas Crash at Bristoe Station

Bristoe Station was a dangerous place to be from 1861 to 1865, especially during the two battles and numerous skirmishes that were fought there in four years of Civil War. Unfortunately, regardless of whether armed forces were engaging one another or not, it was still a place of danger.

On the day after Christmas 1863, trains operated as scheduled along the Orange & Alexandria (O&A) Railroad. The single-track railroad meant that trains passed through Bristoe Station heading south and west in the morning and made the return trip eastbound in the evening.

At 6 p.m. on December 26, the Train No. 8, the second in the caravan of trains leaving Brandy Station for points further east, approached Bristoe Station. The winter darkness restricted the engineer's view. All seemed normal to him, however.

Suddenly, his ears sensed what his eyes could not—danger ahead. Running westbound alongside the tracks towards the locomotive was the section boss on this part of the O&A, a man identified only as Walker. He was “yelling like an unearthly being” in his attempt to get the train to stop. He had no lights or torches to warn the engineer.

Walker's screaming worked somewhat, though. From the cab of the locomotive, the engineer recognized the yelling as unusual and correctly surmised he was

supposed to stop the train. He threw the breaks down, throttled the engine into reverse, and poured sand to halt the train on the tracks. Despite these efforts, momentum continued carrying the train forward at 12 miles per hour.

Walker first realized he had to alert the train when the switch lever, which determined whether the train would travel on the main track or onto the siding at Bristoe Station, had come loose and switched to force any oncoming trains onto the side track. He was working to correct this when he heard the train rolling down the tracks toward him. He attempted to secure the bolt to the lever, which would have enabled him to correct the mechanical mistake. However, the bolt wedged the lever and he could not adjust it in time.

Despite Walker's best efforts, the Train No. 8 hurtled onto the siding and plunged off the track. The engine “turned over down [the] bank,” pulling the next car behind it down. Miraculously, those in the locomotive all survived and were “nearly unhurt.” In the trailing car, though, an assortment of soldiers and civilians were not so lucky. Three men were killed: one civilian who was a Civil War veteran and two Pennsylvania soldiers. Twelve others were wounded and were treated at a nearby hospital. A newspaper report covering the incident

wrote, “They were all doing well.”

Though this incident proved to be an unfortunate accident, it did not stop the press from calling attention to the condition of the O&A Railroad. The train went off the tracks eighty yards from the bridge carrying the railroad over Broad Run. A newspaperman surmised that since the bridge was in such bad shape, if it had made it to the bridge, the span would have collapsed beneath it and claimed “at least one hundred lives.” Other accidents occurred “daily” along the O&A.

John H. Devereux, superintendent of the United States Military Railroad lines that fed into Alexandria, fired back at these claims by reporters in an official report of the accident that OHP staff recently found at the National Archives. Washington's Daily Morning Chronicle first carried the news of the accident to the country. Devereux said it was “written untruthfully, states things falsely and draws inferences which show that the accident is a thing of pleasure to the writer.”

Whether Devereux's accusation is true or not, three men, perhaps heading home to Pennsylvania to visit their family for the Christmas and New Year season, never made it home because of the Christmas crash at Bristoe Station.

Kevin Pawlak

Site Manager, Ben Lomond Historic Site
and Bristoe Station Battlefield



Staff News

Revolutionary War 250- VA/ PWC website and participation – The Office of Historic Preservation is a proud partner with other historic sites across Virginia and the nation tasked with commemorating the United States 250th birthday in July 2026. We have established a webpage on the state website and a local planning committee. The committee is moving ahead with planning programs that highlight county sites that have a connection to the Revolutionary War. Stay tuned for more news about this very big celebration. The website can be found at <https://va250.org/prince-william-county>

VAM Attendance by OHP Staff

In early March, several members of the Office of Historic Preservation attended the Virginia Association of Museums conference at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, VA. This multi-day conference presents the latest scholarship, research and practices in Virginia Museums. During the conference staff members Lauren Maloy, Kevin Pawlak, Paige Gibbons Backus, and Rob Orrison presented on several topics.

HP Staff member Dan Goldstein was awarded his Certificate in Museum Management. Dan had been working



Staff at Virginia Association of Museums Conference, by HP Staff

on this certificate for the past several years. His final project was creating the new Prince William County African American Audio trail. The trail debuted in February and is now available online to listen to. The tour signs are being printed and will be installed at the historic sites later in the Spring.

Williams-Dawe House Update

Bamboo and other invasive plants were recently removed from the Williams-Dawe House site in Brentsville. Stabilization continues on the house. The roof has been repaired, the chimneys have been preserved and the interior has been cleaned out and sanitized. Stay tuned for more news about the house and the work we are doing this Spring.



Bamboo has been removed at the Williams-Dawe House, by HP Staff

Visit our website: www.pwcva.gov/history

8th Annual Prince William/Manassas History Symposium

The 8th Annual Prince William County/Manassas History Symposium took place at the Old Manassas Courthouse on March 25th. Our speakers covered a wide arrange of topics and a crowded house enjoyed each presentation throughout the day.

Dan Goldstein

Historic Interpreter, Rippon Lodge
Historic Site



Symposium guests enjoying a presentation, by HP Staff

Foundation Update

The Prince William Historic Preservation Foundation has fund raised for County-wide historic sites since 2002. In December 2002, the Board entered into an operating agreement with the Foundation to authorize the Foundation to raise funds for historic preservation purposes on behalf of the Board. As part of the Agreement, the Foundation is tasked with creating an Annual Work Plan for approval by the Board. On December 13, 2022 the Board of County Supervisors approved the Foundation's 2023 work plan. The current Annual Work Plan for the Foundation involves raising funds for the following initiatives:

1. Museum and Environmental Education Center at Rippon Lodge Historic Site
2. Bushy Park Historic Site Interpretation
3. Signal Hill Cultural Resource Identification Study
4. Rippon Lodge Interpretation Project
5. Williams-Dawe House Restoration Project



6. Throughfare Historic Park Project
7. Prince William County Revolutionary War Memorial Project

Bill Backus
Curator
Office of Historic Preservation



Images of updated Rippon Lodge Exhibits by Rippon Lodge Staff